

Professional Development

Clearly, the responsibilities facing teachers in a time of accountability are challenging. Students are not required to simply “learn the material.” South Carolina standards require that students “understand” the content and can apply their learning to the real world in a variety of ways. Students must learn a great deal during their school years and this means that teachers must also learn continuously.

The traditional after school workshop, the inspirational speaker, and the “one-size fits all” program are all inadequate strategies for providing learning opportunities to teachers. Instead, the experience must be as rich as the learning opportunities that teachers are required to provide for their students.

What is known about teacher professional development¹

Research suggests that the traditional organization and content of teacher professional development has been ineffective. Effective professional development must incorporate new understanding about how people learn.

Reformers urge that professional development needs to help teachers teach for understanding. It also requires new ideas about what is considered professional development and policies that provide the framework within which professional development can occur.



South Carolina
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Together, we can.

What are the essentials of teacher professional development?²

- It must be grounded in inquiry, reflection, and experimentation that are participant driven.
- It must be collaborative, involving a sharing of knowledge among educators and a focus on teachers’ communities of practice rather than on individual teachers.
- It must be sustained, on-going, and intensive, supported by modeling, coaching, and the collective solving of specific problems of practice.
- It must be connected to and derived from teachers’ work with their students.
- It must engage teachers in concrete tasks of teaching, assessing, observing, and reflecting that illuminate the processes of learning and development.
- It must be connected to other aspects of school change.



For more information, please visit the following sites:

CSO’s Mathematics and Science
Theory of Action
<http://www.myscmsu.org/toa.html>

NSDC's Standards for Staff Development
<http://nsdc.org/standards/index.cfm>

¹ Barbara Neufeld & Roper, D. (2003). *Coaching: A Strategy for Developing Instructional Capacity*. Aspen: CO. The Aspen Institute and The Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

² Linda Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, M.W. (1995). “Policies that Support Professional Development in an Era of Reform.” *Phi Delta Kappan* 76(8): 597-604.

District Leadership Team

The State Department of Education has completed the revision of the standards in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. In addition, the Department has developed support materials and professional development activities to assist districts with the effective implementation of the standards in all eight content areas that have State Board of Education approved standards.

The Legislature has made funds available to support district efforts to ensure that all teachers in every school understand the standards and know what resources are available, as well as how to access those resources.

The Office of Curriculum and Standards believes that it is vitally important to coordinate our work related to standards and supporting materials with district plans for standards implementation.

The essential question faced by the Office of Curriculum and Standards and the districts is simply:

"How do we ensure that every teacher in every school in South Carolina is aware of the meaning of the currently approved standards, as well as available resources such as support documents and professional development opportunities?"



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In 2007-08, a major area of focus for the Office of Curriculum and Standards will be to support district planning activities with technical expertise and with funds specifically directed to provide professional development.

While each school district is different, the plans should be developed based on the answers to the following questions:

- What are the strategies that you will use in your schools that will likely result in the desired outcomes?
- What specific opportunities and challenges exist in your schools and district?
- What are some activities that will help overcome the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities present in your schools and district?
- How will you ensure that teachers and administrators understand the importance and imperatives of the plan?
- How will you identify the fiscal and personnel resources necessary to effectively implement your plan according to established timelines?

The Office of Curriculum and Standards
Regional Centers

